

18. (amended) A method of forming a table or counter mat according to claim 16 further including:

BL providing a sublimation printing process by placing a screen printed or digital image printed paper which carries the required design on the upper textile layer surface of the bar runner blank with print face down and activating a heat platen to press the screen printed or digital image printed paper to the textile surface under a selected heat, pressure and time duration.

REMARKS

The undersigned wishes to extend appreciation to Examiners Wachtel and Morris for the courtesies extended in a personal interview on May 23, 2002 (with applicant's Australian attorney Ian Rose) at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. The substance of that personal interview is hereby confirmed and expanded upon. It was the impression of the undersigned that the two actual products produced according to the teachings of the present invention which were shown to and left with the Examiners clearly established that the present invention was patentably different from the prior art and that the only obstacle to allowance of the present application was whether those differences were recited in the claims.

In particular, it was indicated that areas of patentable differences included surface density which resulted in the ability to rest cups, mugs or glasses on the mat as well as provide an advertising message of greater clarity.

Another patentable difference discussed was surface material which resulted in the absorbent advantages of the mat of the present invention. In this regard, the Examiners indicated that claims having the recitations directed to the top surface including "consisting of" language may be a possibility.

Still another patentable difference was the relative thicknesses of the upper layer(s) versus the non-slip backing layer. In this regard, the Examiner indicated that claims expressing thicknesses in the form of a ratio (as opposed to numeral recitations) may be a possibility.

It is believed that the claims as now amended define such patentable differences. However, it is contemplated that further amendments will be made to the present application after applicant's Australian attorney returns to Australia and the inventor has been conferred with. Thus, in the event that the Examiner should take this application up for examination before

a SUPPLEMENTAL AMENDMENT has been filed, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to confirm that a SUPPLEMENTAL AMENDMENT has in fact not been filed.

The Examiners confirmed that the April 23, 2001 Information Disclosure Statement was in the file wrapper and the prior art had been considered prior to the mailing of the November 29, 2001 Office communication. The Examiner indicated that the initialed PTO-Form 1449 would be copied and returned with the next Office communication.

As set forth in an e-mail of May 17, 2002, an Information Disclosure Statement was also sent by Express Mail on May 15, 2002 for the above application. Although it was not in the file wrapper during the May 23, 2002 interview, it is respectfully requested that the undersigned be contacted if not in the file wrapper when the application is taken up for examination again.

Lastly, the Examiner confirmed that the Change of Address was in the file, and the Patent Office records would be changed before further communications are mailed.

Favorable consideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Robert Carkeek

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By: 

Alan D. Kamrath (Reg. No. 28,227)
RIDER BENNETT EGAN & ARUNDEL
333 South Seventh Street, Suite 2000
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Tel: (612) 340-8925
Fax: (612) 340-7900

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claim 1 as follows:

1. (amended) A table or counter mat having a composite sheet structure comprising a non-slip backing layer; a top liquid absorbent textile surface for resting cups, mugs or glasses; and an intermediate **[stabilisation] stabilization** layer joining the backing layer to the textile surface wherein the resultant mat is absorbent and readily able to be laundered.

Please amend claim 4 as follows:

4. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 3 wherein the nitrile rubber is in the range of less than 2 mm thick with a density of about 1000 grams per square **[metre] meter**.

Please amend claim 5 as follows:

5. (twice amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 3 wherein the intermediate **[stabilisation] stabilization** layer comprises a heat curable material curable at temperatures greater than 100°C and preferably at about 170°C such that the mat is able to be laundered in hot water.

Please amend claim 7 as follows:

7. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 6 wherein the non-woven polyester has a density of about 450 to 650 grams per square **[metre] meter**.

Please amend claim 8 as follows:

8. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 5 wherein the textile surface includes a textile marking providing a **[colouring or] coloring**, a print or **an** advertising message viewable from above.

Please amend claim 11 as follows:

11. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 10 wherein the top liquid absorbent textile surface is formed from a polyester surface with a pile height substantially in the range of 3 to 7 **[millimetres.] millimeters**.

Please amend claim 12 as follows:

12. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 8 wherein the top liquid absorbent textile surface is formed from a tufted nylon cut pile surface with a pile height

Please amend claim 13 as follows:

13. (amended) A table or counter mat according to claim 12 wherein the textile surface has a density of about 600 grams per square **[metre] meter**.

Please amend claim 16 as follows:

16. (amended) A method of forming a table or counter mat including **[the steps of]**:

- a) forming a nitrile rubber sheet material as a backing layer;
- b) forming an intermediate layer of non-woven polyester fabric;
- c) forming a textile surface layer to form an upper layer; **and**
- d) aligning all three layers and compressing the **[layered up] layered** materials by a heated platen for **[a]** selected time duration, pressure and temperature settings to cure and bond the nitrile rubber backing to the intermediate layer and upper textile layer;

wherein the resultant table or counter mat lays flat and is able to support stably a glass or other similar liquid vessel with the table or counter mat liquid absorbent to absorb any spilled liquid.

Please amend claim 18 as follows:

18. (amended) A method of forming a table or counter mat according to claim 16 **further** including: **[the step of]**

providing a sublimation printing process by **[using] placing** a screen printed or digital image **[print] printed** paper which carries the required design **[and placing]** on the upper textile layer surface of the bar runner blank with print face down and activating a heat platen to press the screen **[print] printed** or digital image **[print] printed** paper to the textile surface under a selected heat, pressure and time duration.